

least two second dummy components 20 are connected between a common connecting line 14a of the second group and another associated connecting line 14b of the second group.

By arranging the modular hydraulic system in this manner, individual valve components can be associated with each dummy component such that, together with other components, they perform the necessary and desired functions for the operation of the modular hydraulic system. In this manner, the primary valve block is configured as a matrix with transverse and longitudinal rows, together with the dummy components, permit performing a large number of system functions in a space saving and cost-effective manner.

Claims 9-21 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 4,080,983 to Stumpmeier. The Stumpmeier patent is cited for disclosing a modular valve system in which lines A, B, F, P, and T were allegedly analogous to connecting lines 14 of this application and the lines 8 connecting the valves are analogous to connecting lines 12 of this application. The distributor modules are allegedly disposed in Stumpmeier transverse bores 8 along line A, B, F, etc. providing different connections and functions, including connecting adjacent lines, any one of which can be designated as “dummy” components. The particular claimed configuration is alleged to be obvious in view of the Stumpmeier flexibility. The use of pressure gages or 3/2 valves with the Stumpmeier valve base is alleged to be obvious. The choice of a tank is also considered to be obvious. Relative to the arguments made in the prior Amendment that the Stumpmeier system fails to include components comparable to components that connect lines of the second group, reference is made to the component in the left most position of Figure 5 of this Stumpmeier patent with the contention that channels T, P, A, B, F correspond to the lines 14 of this application.

The Stumpmeier patent appears to disclose a valve base with parallel channels F, T, A, B and P. Holes in the body 1 communicate with the channels and receive hydraulic valves. Transverse bores 8 are provided for receiving distributor modules of different types, and intersect the coplanar passages T, P, A, B and F to enable connections required for a desired hydraulic circuit between those channels. However, none of the valves to be located in the holes provide at least three first dummy components coupled to the connecting lines of the second group and at least two second dummy components connected between a common connecting line of the second group and another associated connecting line of the second group. No comparison between the Stumpmeier system and that recited in the claims of this application demonstrates the presence of this arrangement in the Stumpmeier patent, particularly of the second dummy components connecting to second group lines. No valves connect the Stumpmeier bores 8.

The rejection appears to involve a misinterpretation of the drawing of Figure 5. The component in the left hand most box of Figure 5 merely provides flow in two directions, but not a connection between the flows through channel F and bore 8 of the Stumpmeier patent. The representation in Figure 3 shows that there is no such fluid connection, and that the flows through channel F and bore 8 are separated. The representation of Figure 5 also shows there is no connection because of the omission of a dot between the two double headed arrows. A dot connecting the arrows is needed to represent a fluid connection, as particularly shown by a comparison of Figs. 9-11 of the Stumpmeier patent, where Fig. 9 with no dot shows no connection and where Figs. 10 and 11 with dots show connections. None of the other connections provide a coupling in fluid communication between any two of the channels A, B, F, P and T. Thus, no suggestion, teaching or reason is provided by the Stumpmeier patent that it

would be obvious to provide a connection corresponding to component 20 of this application between two lines of the second group, as claimed. While various Stumpmeier components can be replaced, there is no suggestion or reason in that patent for using these components to provide these specific connections recited in claim 9 of this application.

Accordingly, claim 9 is patentably distinguishable over the Stumpmeier patent. None of the other cited patents cure these deficiencies in the Stumpmeier patent.

Claims 10-21 being dependent upon claim 9, are also allowable for the above reasons. Moreover, these dependent claims recite additional features further distinguishing them over the cited patents. These additional features are not addressed in the Office Action.

Claim 10 is further distinguishable by at least one dummy component being unoccupied by a valve component, blocking a respective fluid conducting passage of at least one connecting line of the first and second groups, or forming a fluid-connecting path between connecting lines of the second group. No such arrangement is shown to be disclosed in the Stumpmeier patent.

Claim 11 is further distinguishable by the primary valve block comprising external side connecting points, particularly within the overall claimed combination.

Claim 12 is further distinguishable by the specific additional components recited, particularly within the overall combination.

Claim 13 is further distinguishable by the use of a secondary connection block comprising additional dummy components.

Claim 14 is further distinguishable by the first dummy components receiving valve components, within the overall claimed combination.

Claim 15 is further distinguishable by the valve component being pressure control valves, return valves, chokes or diaphragms.

Claim 16 is further distinguishable by the additional dummy components being switching valves, pressure control valves or valves functioning as a pressure scale. No such valves are shown to be disclosed or obvious in the Stumpmeier patent.

Claim 17 is further distinguishable by the switching valves being 2/2-way switching valves or 3/2-way switching valves. No such valves are shown to be disclosed or obvious in the Stumpmeier patent.

Claim 18 is further distinguishable by the arrangement of the dummy components in groups. Such arrangement is not shown to be disclosed or obvious in the Stumpmeier patent.

Claim 19 is further distinguishable by the groups being of 2 and 3 dummy components. Such groups are not shown to be disclosed or obvious in the Stumpmeier patent.

Claim 20 is further distinguishable by the claimed tank module. Such tank module is not shown to be disclosed or obvious in the Stumpmeier patent.

Claim 21 is further distinguishable by the tank parts of varying modules. No such modules are shown to be disclosed or obvious in the Stumpmeier patent.

In view of the foregoing, claims 9-21 are allowable. Prompt and favorable action is solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Mark S. Bicks", is written above a horizontal line.

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